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ABSTRACT

This study is part of a long-range effort to identify the psychological processes in adults that influence how they relate to children and that play a role in determining what kinds of children they are likely to work with most effectively. Previous studies have suggested that a valuable source of information may lie in adults' recollections of their childhood selves and, further, that such data may prove useful in the process of selecting adults for work with children. The present research is a direct outgrowth of one of these earlier studies (Rosen, 1968) and is an attempt to extend the practical implications of its findings. This report presents and compares the results of the two studies, interprets them in relation to concepts and research concerning the growth-promoting adult, and suggests directions for future research. Methods employed in this present study include student teachers' autobiographies, interviews with advisors, and advisor ratings. (Author/JA)

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THE REMEMBERED CHILDHOOD SELF AS FORECASTER OF TEACHER-CHILD RELATIONS

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What are the personality resources that enable a teacher to develop good relations with children? Why is one teacher able to create a positive emotional climate in the classroom while another generates an atmosphere of conflict, hostility or alienation? As mental health professionals join educators in tackling the vast problems confronting the schools today, there is intensifying interest in the human elements that influence classroom life and in finding ways of identifying among prospective teaching personnel those who will become constructive forces in the lives of children at school.[1] It is within this social context that the present study of a group of student teachers was undertaken. The study is part of a long-range effort to identify the psychological processes in adults that influence how they relate to children and that play a role in determining what kinds of children they are likely to work with most effectively.

Previous studies have suggested that a valuable source of information in this effort may lie in adults' recollections of their childhood selves; and further, that such data may prove useful in the process of selecting adults for work with children.[2] The present research is a direct outgrowth of one of these earlier studies (Rosen, 1968) and is an attempt to extend the practical implications of its findings. This report presents and compares the results of the two studies, interprets them in relation to concepts and research concerning the growth-promoting adult and suggests directions for future research.

THE EARLIER STUDY

The earlier study revealed that autobiographies written by a group of student teachers under standard research conditions yielded gross indicators of the quality of teacher-child relations which the subjects developed in their own classrooms

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after they had been teaching for a year. The 44 subjects -- 38 women and 6 men -- had been drawn from six undergraduate teacher-training institutions in the New York City area and all were close to their graduation at the time the autobiographical data and other personality assessment materials were collected.[3] The autobiographies were written in response to a general research question about their childhood personalities and experiences.

A year later, toward the end of their first year as full-fledged teachers of pre- or elementary-school children, the subjects were observed at different times in their classrooms by four educators who supplied the criterion ratings for the project. One of these ratings reflected the degree to which the subjects had developed positive or negative relations with the children they were teaching. Analysis of the data revealed that ratings on this measure were substantially associated with the autobiographical data in two ways. In brief, the subjects who received high ratings -- those who had developed good relations with children -- were much more likely than those who were rated low, to have described their childhood selves in predominantly favorable terms, conveying a picture of self-esteem or of childhood vitality, and to have used strong positive affect words (e.g., I loved) in recalling their early lives. The low-rated subjects focused on their early lack of mastery of their worlds or their uncertain sense of worth, and seldom used words denoting enthusiasm for any aspect of their childhoods.

Since these associations were consistent with theoretical expectations, as later discussed, it seemed important to determine whether the findings were potentially relevant to problems of selecting teaching personnel. Would similar associations obtain if the autobiographies were written by actual applicants for teacher training, rather than by subjects of a standard research project, as before? The present study is based on a group of student teachers who were enrolled in a teacher-training program which routinely requires all prospective candidates to

submit, among other application data, an autobiographical essay.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Methods

Subjects

The sample for the present study consisted of 48 women students enrolled in a graduate program for the training of prospective preschool and elementary-school teachers. With a few exceptions, they were in their early to middle twenties, were graduates of liberal arts colleges, and came from upper-middle-class backgrounds. The subjects were not preselected by the investigator, but instead included those students who had been assigned to the advisors who were available for research interviews as described below.

Sources of Data

Autobiographies. Each subject had submitted an autobiographical essay as part of her application to the program. These essays, which constitute the predictive data of the study, were written in response to the following instructions:

> It is recognized that teaching is not only a matter of technical competence but also a process of building relationships with children. Thus, information concerning personal life experiences including childhood is considered relevant both to the selection and preparation of the teacher.
>
> Review briefly the events of childhood and adolescence, at home, in school. How did you feel about your early experiences and relationships as you were living through them? As you look back now, which experiences and relationships seem to have had a meaningful effect on your development as a person going into the teaching profession? Describe also the recent experiences which have been most important for you -- study, reading, friendships, unusual adventures or opportunities, disappointments, new skills or attitudes, new insights into yourself and others. What led to your decision to become a teacher?
>
> Write as freely as though you were talking to someone. The contents of this personal essay will be kept confidential.

Interviews with Students' Advisors. The criterion ratings for the study were obtained from ten student advisors who were available for interviews at the end of

the academic year.[4] Since the advisors were solely responsible for the criterion ratings, it is important to comment on the nature of their contacts with their students during training.

Each advisor at the institution is assigned from four to six students. He or she observes the students regularly in their three to four classroom placements as apprentice teachers throughout the academic year and holds conferences with the cooperating teachers in whose classrooms the students are working. In addition, the advisor meets with the students individually in bi-weekly advisory conferences and holds weekly conferences with them as a group. As a result of these many and varying contacts, the advisors have ample opportunity to gain knowledge of their students' subjective attitudes toward children as well as their actual relationships with children in the classroom.

Prior to the time that the individual interviews with the advisors were scheduled, the investigator had met with the advisors several times in their own weekly seminars and especially in those that focused on problems of selecting and counseling students and of making more efficient use in these respects of the admissions materials, including the autobiographies. Thus, when the investigator proposed the idea for the present study, the advisors viewed it as relevant to their concerns, and their cooperation in the interviews was, without exception, excellent.

Each advisor was interviewed one or more times for a total of two to four hours. The interviews, which were semi-structured, called for specific ratings on various dimensions of each student's work and relations with children, and sought supporting observational data. For purposes of the present analysis the advisors were asked to make a global assessment of each student's "natural capacity to relate to children" -- irrespective of other aspects of her potential as a teacher. To insure that this criterion would have as similar a stimulus value as

possible for different respondents and that the ratings would be based on considerations much like those that the classroom observers had used in the earlier study, a description was read to the advisors of the kinds of behavior and attitudes adults might display at the extremes of the continuum. These illustrative behaviors and attitudes were derived from the notations made by the classroom observers in the earlier study in documenting their ratings of the subjects.[5] The advisor then rated the student on a four-step scale: Outstanding, Good, Fair, Poor.

In order that the investigator could analyze the autobiographies of the subjects without knowing what their advisors' assessements of them had been, each advisor was asked at the outset of the interview to write out a list of the students' names, to place a code letter by each and to refer to the students only by their code letters during the interview. At the completion of the interview, the coded list was put in an envelope, and when all interviews had been terminated, the lists were given to a person unconnected with the study to obtain the appropriate autobiographies from the admissions files.

Treatment of Data

As in the earlier study, the subjects' descriptions of their childhoods were assessed in two ways. First, they were examined for the degree of positive affect reflected in the words that were used by the subjects in their recall of childhood activities, events or persons. A plus was assigned if the subject had used expressions such as I loved or was crazy about; a minus was assigned if the subject had used only mild positive expressions such as I liked or enjoyed or if she had described no positive feelings at all.

The second treatment of the data involved a global assessment of the subjects' characterizations of their childhood selves either as predominantly positive or as predominantly negative.[6] The guidelines used were those derived from the childhood descriptions of the high- and the low-rated subjects in the earlier study: i.e.,

the high-rated subjects conveyed attitudes of strong liking and respect for their childhood selves, even when difficult external circumstances were described. They referred either explicitly or implicitly to such personality facets as an early sense of independence, resourcefulness, feelings of social adequacy and ability to achieve something that had been important to them, or they pictured their childhoods as happy and secure, and themselves as having enjoyed their lives in an active way. When they attributed to themselves characteristics that adults might have found annoying, they did so with an amused, accepting quality. When they mentioned brothers or sisters, they invariably described them with affection or pride and sometimes as ego ideals.

By contrast, the low-rated subjects focused on unpleasant feelings from their early lives, conveyed less of a sense of childhood ego strength, or recalled feeling uncertain about their sense of worth. Some described qualities they seemed to reject about their childhood selves; others appeared still resentful of early deprivations and of siblings whom they viewed as being treated preferentially by their parents. Still others could barely remember their childhoods at all. In general, these subjects conveyed an impression of passivity in relation to the circumstances of their childhood -- as they described it, life had happened to them -- while their counterparts in the high-rated group recalled living actively and by their own initiative.

After the autobiographical assessments had been completed and the interview data decoded, a count was made of the subjects in each of the four criterion categories who had been assigned a plus and of those who had been assigned a minus on the affect dimension, and a calculation was made of the percentages of pluses and minuses within each category. The same procedure was carried out in relation to the assessments of predominantly positive and predominantly negative attitudes toward the childhood self. Additionally, for each of these two dimensions, a chi-

square test was applied to the combined totals of the two highest and the two lowest criterion rating categories (i.e., outstanding and good/fair and poor).

Results

Table 1 shows that the higher the advisor-rating category, the greater the proportion of subjects within that category who had used strong, positive affect words in describing their childhoods. The percentage of such subjects within each category was as follows: poor 13%; fair 29%; good 47%; outstanding 61%. The findings parallel those of the earlier study.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 2 similarly shows that the higher the advisor-rating category, the greater the likelihood that the subjects had characterized their childhood selves in predominantly positive ways, with the differences at the extremes being striking: poor 0; fair 14%; good 60%; outstanding 89%.

Insert Table 2 about here

The following two sets of excerpts taken from the autobiographies of students who were rated "outstanding" and "poor," respectively, are illustrative of the differences in the childhood descriptions that were assessed as predominantly positive and as predominantly negative:

Predominantly Positive/Rated "Outstanding"

> Childhood has memories of a close family life and much time spent outdoors....We spent summers in Maine living outdoors for two or three months in what seemed like an endless period to a child, a time filled with picnics, boats, beachcombing, swimming, reading. I liked action and for a while was the proud member of an all-boy gang. We raced around

the woods, Tom Sawyer style. I did have close friends who were girls. We often made up stories and acted them out. We also had projects like making a book, bound together by uneven stitches! I also loved sports, and springtime meant neighborhood baseball or basketball games played out in the warm, lazy air until evening fell.

* * * * *

In thinking back over the events of my childhood I find it very difficult to separate out the feelings I must have had as it was unfolding from those I have now about it in retrospect. It seems to me that I was always happy, perhaps then unconsciously so, for I don't remember being anguished by anything until I was fifteen or so. I remember being extremely awed at the beginning of first grade -- the third graders seemed to be marvelous giants -- but I had a marvelous teacher and made a very good friend. By third grade I had made two very good friends, Barbara and Pam. We all lived very close together and we became inseparable both in and out of school. We were best in everything and though I don't have any recollections of it whatsoever, we must at times have been insufferable to the others. In sixth grade I remember we decided that fifth and sixth grades were the best years of our lives; we loved our teacher for whom I remember we used to raid every neighbor's garden and come bicycling to school laden with flowers.

* * * * *

In reviewing the events of my childhood, the most obvious and dramatic aspect is that my family has been the basic

foundation in my life....I consider myself extremely fortunate because I have always been able to go to my parents when I felt the need for moral support, opinions or guidance ....The nursery school and its teacher must have been very good, because I really looked forward to going to school. From kindergarten through fourth grade, I went to a small school and these were, without doubt, the best years of my pre-college education. I loved my teachers and hated to be away from school when we had vacations.

Predominantly Negative/Rated "Poor"

In elementary school I began as a failure and an isolate. I was "kept back" in the third grade, too frightened of the teacher to be able to hear what she was teaching in arithmetic.

* * * * *

My childhood and adolescence seem actually rather devoid of any "events." My recollection of early years is hazy; they seemed moderately happy and interesting....I always had good friends but I was somewhat bored with school and felt myself a bit of an "outsider" because of my intelligence.

* * * * *

I had few friends. My social relationships have only now ceased to be a source of intense worry and self-doubt....I was clever and smart-alecky, and I exploited it for attention, but it did confuse me. I didn't know if I were superior or inferior, but I disliked the social inferiority more.

In sum, the subjects who were rated high on their capacity to relate to children tended to express predominantly positive attitudes toward their early lives

and conveyed a sense of self-esteem about their childhood personalities; while the low-rated subjects either focused on their early lack of mastery of their worlds and uncertain sense of self-worth or gave a sense of psychological remoteness from their childhood experiences. These associations, like those on the affect dimension, correspond to the findings of the earlier study.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Considerations

At the time the earlier investigation of student teachers was instituted, numerous studies existed in the educational research literature that had been aimed at relating teacher personality to various measures of teaching performance. But the vast majority of these studies had been sharply criticized as revealing little or nothing about such relationships (Getzels and Jackson; Ebel). The major reason among the many which Getzels and Jackson proffered to account for their failure was that, in the main, the studies had been instituted without either theoretical rationale or concern with selecting relevant instruments; and that the studies had been terminated without any effort at interpretation of the findings.[7] As a result, few theoretical guidelines or promising methods existed which had arisen from educational research itself and which would be useful in developing new studies on the relationships between teacher personality and varying aspects of teaching performance, including the teacher's relations with children in the classroom.

At the same time, however, preliminary concepts and methods had been developed outside the field of educational research which seemed relevant to a study of the personality of the teacher and the teacher's relations with children. These concepts had largely been derived from the clinical observations of psychologists and psychiatrists concerned with the factors that influence the adult's ability to promote psychological growth in children (Olden; Harris; Bettelheim and Wright).

They were also derived from this investigator's research on a group of child-care workers and their attitudes toward the institutionalized, emotionally disturbed children with whom they lived and worked (Rosen, 1963). The latter work suggested the potential value of the childhood autobiography as an instrument in the study of student teachers, even though the children involved would not be emotionally disturbed.

The existing concepts suggested the formulation that the adult's ability to promote psychological growth in children is contingent on his capacity for empathic identification with them, which is mediated by the adult's childhood self, as it has been integrated in his adult personality.

A Model of the Growth-Promoting Adult

Put in ideal terms, the adult who is able to understand emotionally how children think and feel and who is able to use this empathic identification cognitively, that is, in the service of the children's needs, has himself, in the course of growing up, been able to accept his own early feelings and needs; and through the transformations that these feelings and needs have undergone in the process of his total personality development, has gained perspective on them. This integration of the childhood self into the total personality, and resulting perspective, enables the person in adulthood to recapture the feelings and thoughts of his childhood without losing (or fear of losing) his identity as an adult; and it enables him to use these subjective experiences for understanding and responding constructively to children.

A Model of the Growth-Inhibiting Adult

By the same token, the adult who, in the process of growing up, has sealed off his early feelings and needs from the developing personality, or the adult who has never emerged from these feelings and needs sufficiently to achieve psychological distance from them, may remain emotionally aloof from children

and restrict their spontaneity; or he may feel so closely identified with children that he cannot distinguish between their needs and his own. In the first instance, the adult would, theoretically, have difficulty in allowing himself to experience what children feel, or in fact in permitting them to express feeling spontaneously since therein lies a potential threat to the barriers that imprison his own early primitive feelings, which are ego-alien. In the second instance, where the adult overidentifies with children (or with children who show certain characteristics), he is likely to encourage behavior in the children which permits a vicarious living out of his own unresolved conflicts through the children, and which leads to a display on his part of partisan and competitive tactics.

While these are theoretical models, and necessarily oversimplified, they serve to indicate how the childhood self may play a role in facilitating or obstructing the development of potential in the adult for sensing and responding to children's needs and experiences in ways that encourage their psychological growth.

Interpretation of Data

These models are of special interest when the behaviors attributed to the growth-inhibiting and growth-promoting adult are examined in relation to the behavioral descriptions which accompanied the ratings made by the classroom observers in the earlier study (and which also provided a guide for the advisor's ratings in the present research, as noted in "Sources of Data"). In brief, the subjects who received low ratings on their relations with children were described primarily in terms of their insensitivity to the children, their emotional aloofness and their restrictiveness of the children's spontaneity, or in terms suggesting their competitiveness with the children and their tendency to play favorites. High-rated teachers, by contrast, were described in terms of their sensitivity to and support of children's needs, their ability to have fun with children, and their capacity to enter into the children's fantasies without losing their identity as

adults.

Furthermore, in both studies, the subjects who were rated low on their relations with children wrote negatively of their childhood selves, emphasized their self-doubt and insecurity while growing up, or had difficulty remembering their childhoods. In contrast, the high-rated subjects conveyed their sense of mastery or self-esteem in childhood, or recalled early experiences with apparent pleasure or enthusiasm.[8]

If these differences in the characterizations of the childhood self are assumed in general to reflect lesser and greater degrees of acceptance of and perspective on the childhood self, then the associations between the autobiographies and the subjects' observed relations with children in the classroom can be viewed as consistent with the above models of the growth-inhibiting and the growth-promoting adult.

There were independent data in the earlier study which lent indirect support to this assumption. These data were derived from questionnaires that had been administered to the subjects along with the autobiographies, and from research interviews that were held with them the following year.

Specifically the subjects were asked on the questionnaire what they hoped to be at age fifty if they remained in the school system. They were given five response choices -- one, to be a classroom teacher, and the others to be administrators or a college teacher. The difference between the responses of the high-rated and the low-rated subjects was sharply defined, though in an unanticipated direction. The subjects who were rated high on their teacher-class relations almost invariably hoped to move out of classroom teaching; those who were rated low, just as consistently hoped to remain.

On the surface, a reversal of these relationships might have made more sense. Young prospective teachers, on the brink of their careers, should spontaneously

choose to remain classroom teachers when confronted with hypothetical alternatives involving dim, far-distant goals -- especially if they get on well with children and seem to enjoy them. Similarly, student teachers who are already thinking of becoming principals or college teachers should be those who view teaching young children merely as a stepping-stone to positions of greater prestige or power, and thus, they should show relatively little investment in children as they work with them in the classroom.

How then could the associations that did in fact occur be explained? In their interviews the following year, the high-rated subjects expressed the belief that a teacher should have broad interests and develop herself as a person, as well as professionally. During their first year of teaching they had sought further knowledge of their profession and of child development by taking courses and reading, by seeking help from supervisors when problems arose, and by being open to criticisms of their work. Most of them had taken steps to modify their methods in keeping with what they were learning. Some said they wanted to give each child a positive feeling about learning and school and believed that, first, the child must have a good feeling about himself as a person. In general, these subjects thought it important to bring the children's home and school life closer together and had taken responsibility for working with the parents of the children in their classrooms toward this end.

The low-rated subjects, on the other hand, either denied having problems in their work or said they could work them out themselves, saw no need for further training, and expressed resentment toward people in authority who made suggestions about their teaching, feeling personally criticized. They tended to see little point in working with parents, many expressing hostility toward them and avoiding them. The members of this group viewed the teacher's role as promoting the acquisition of information in children and teaching them to be well-behaved, polite and respectful to adults. In fact, some of them appeared to rely on such achievements in the

children as proof of their own worth.

In brief, these and other data from the interviews led to the conclusion that the high-rated subjects had a sense of growing competence and psychological movement forward and that they welcomed challenge and progress as part of life, for children and for themselves; and that the low-rated subjects were guarded and resistant to change, avoiding rather than seeking opportunities to develop themselves, and that their goals for children were oriented more toward the needs of adults (including their own needs) than toward fostering psychological growth in children. From this standpoint, the expressed long-range career goals of the two groups could be viewed as reflecting personality differences. These differences were consonant with the finding that the subjects who expected to move out of the classroom were judged as relating well to children, and that the subjects who hoped to remain in the classroom were judged as relating poorly to children, as displaying difficulties in promoting their growth.

Finally, the attitudes of the two groups toward their futures could be understood in relation to their remembered childhoods, reflecting consistent developmental pictures. Specifically, as formulated by Erikson, the experience of self-esteem is confirmed at the end of each developmental crisis and grows to be a conviction that one is learning effective steps toward a tangible future. The subjects who emphasized their sense of mastery -- or self-esteem -- in describing their childhoods, appeared to have this conviction. Their counterparts, who stressed their childhood insecurity and self-doubt, revealed, at least in their professional aspirations, no expectation of a future different from the present.

Thus, the earlier study suggested relationships between the subjects' descriptions of their childhood selves and independent data on their personalities which were consistent with theoretical expectations, and which indirectly also supported the assumed relationships between the childhood data and the models of the growth-

promoting and the growth-inhibiting adult.

Further Considerations

Strengths and Limitations of the Autobiographical Indicators

The fact that the associations found in the earlier study between the autobiographical data and the subjects' relations with children were found again in the present investigation, suggests that the autobiography on childhood has potential usefulness as an instrument for selecting prospective teachers. It will be recalled that the earlier study was based on the subjects of a standard research project, and the subjects knew that what they wrote about their childhoods would have no bearing on their personal lives. In the present investigation, however, the subjects were applicants for a teacher training program, and they knew that their autobiographies would be evaluated along with other admissions material in the institution's selection procedures. More than this, they were informed that the institution considered information about the childhood of the applicant relevant to the selection of the teacher (see Sources of Data). The applicants may, therefore, have had special reason to present their childhoods in a positive light. But despite these differing motivational conditions, the applicants who were rated low on their relations with children, like the subjects who had been rated low in the earlier study, emphasized negative aspects of their childhood personalities in writing their autobiographies or conveyed a psychological remoteness from childhood events and feelings.

It should be emphasized, however, that further research is necessary before the autobiography can be used with confidence in the context of teacher selection. It is true that the affect variable can be measured reliably and objectively, and that in both studies it has been found to compare favorably with the measures that numerous other investigators have used in attempting to relate teacher personality to various aspects of teaching performance. Nevertheless, it is not sufficiently

powerful to stand alone as a predictor variable. Moreover, while the global judgments of the subjects' attitudes toward their childhoods appeared to have considerable predictive value, especially in relation to the extremes of "poor" and "outstanding" teacher-child relations, such judgments could require the application of clinical skills which may not be available in many teacher-training institutions.

There is reason to believe that further studies could serve to make the assessment of attitudes toward childhood less dependent on the application of a complex theoretical framework, if such work were directed toward identifying a group of discrete autobiographical indicators which, applied in combination with the affect measure, would essentially reflect the basic elements that are involved in global judgments requiring clinical skills. Such an effort -- to refine the predictor instrument -- should be accompanied by the application of criterion measures that derive not only from the general concept of the adult's capacity to relate to children but also from more differentiated concepts of such capacities, such as the kinds of children the adult can work with most effectively.

Related Studies and Implications for a Differentiated Approach

Two studies have suggested that autobiographies on childhood may be relevant for predicting variations in adult relations with children who differ in important ways, and for contributing to an explanation of these variations. One of these studies, mentioned earlier, concerned the attitudes of a group of child-care workers toward the needs and coping styles of the institutionalized emotionally disturbed children with whom they lived and worked (Rosen, 1963). The other focused on variations in student teachers' relations with children in three age ranges, from preschool through elementary school (Rosen, 1972). Although the two studies differ in methodology as well as context, both suggest that the characteristics and themes that adults emphasize in describing their childhoods have

correlates in the needs and coping styles of the children whom they themselves feel best able to understand, communicate with and work with most competently or whom objective observers judge them to work with most effectively.

In the study of child care workers, which was based on a series of individual, semi-structured interviews, it was found, for example, that the workers (who were both men and women) felt most positively toward individual disturbed children whose dominant needs and coping styles, though exaggerated in expression, most closely resembled their own childhood patterns, as they portrayed these. In parallel, they felt most negatively toward children who displayed characteristics that were diametrically opposed to those they recalled in themselves. They also felt most competent in working with children whose tendencies toward aggressiveness or withdrawal -- two major types of behavior that constantly confronted them in their work -- were similar to their own early tendencies in one direction or the other. Though none of the workers seemed to be aware of these associations -- for example, that they had described the child they liked best in the same terms they later used in characterizing themselves as children -- they did recognize that their reasons for liking, or for feeling competent in working with, certain children were related to a feeling of empathy with them, a sense of being able to communicate with them and to respond positively to their needs. By the same token, the workers gave evidence of marked difficulty in understanding, and in finding avenues by which to approach, the children toward whom they felt negatively and with whom they felt least competent in their work.

The study of student-teacher effectiveness with children of different ages was based on a subsample of the present study, i.e., the subjects who had not been rated poor in their capacity to relate to children. It explored in the subjects' written autobiographies, specific thematic differences that might be assiciated with variations in their judged effectiveness with preschool, primary-grade and upper-elementary-

school children. These three levels were selected as roughly demarcating successive stages of development in childhood with which differing dominant needs and coping styles are theoretically linked and which, therefore, it was reasoned, should have varying implications for the role of and personality demands on the teacher. Analysis of the data revealed autobiographical differences among the student teacher groups who were judged as being relatively most effective at each level. Consonant with the study of the child care workers, the subjects' descriptions of their childhoods were seen to mirror some of the dominant needs, strivings, potential gratifications or coping styles associated with the age level of the children with whom the subjects worked best. The subjects who were most effective with preschool children stressed, for example, their pleasurable recall of the security and joys of being a child, supported and encouraged by loving and interested parents or other significant adults; the effective primary school subjects emphasized how they had valued (or actually assumed) independent or grown-up roles, or they stressed their early need to master or achieve basic skills. The upper elementary group, while revealing greater diversity in basic personality-related themes, recalled adults or older siblings who had stimulated in them a love of learning and ideas and emphasized the importance of their peers in the course of growing up. These and other thematic differences among the three groups were viewed as reflecting differential bases for empathy with and responsiveness to the developmental needs of the children at the three age levels.

As indicated, the sample for the above analysis consisted only of subjects who had not been rated "poor" in their capacity to relate to children. It will be recalled that all the subjects who had been rated "poor" described their childhood selves in negative terms, as did all but one of the subjects who had been rated "fair." There remained, however, eight subjects who described their childhood selves negatively but who nevertheless were judged by their advisors to have "good"

or "outstanding" capacity to relate to children.

A return to the data from the advisors' interviews revealed that seven of these eight subjects were judged as being most effective at the upper elementary level and as being effective at that level almost exclusively. Moreover, all of them were assessed by their advisors as being frankly unsuited for work with children in the preschool years -- as being unable to understand, communicate with or meet the needs of such children, or to have little inclination for doing so. This limitation was not applied to most of their counterparts who were also judged to be most effective with older children but who had described their childhood selves positively. In fact, some of these latter subjects were viewed as being able to relate to young children just as adequately as to older ones, but by virtue of their preference for the intellectual challenge of the upper elementary curriculum, were judged as being most effective at that level.

Why then were the subjects in this sample who described their childhood selves negatively, but who were judged as being "good" or "outstanding" in their capacity to relate to children, seen to be effective with older children but not with younger ones? In the interview data the advisors emphasized that these subjects were able to relate to children primarily on a conceptual level and that they enjoyed teaching the content of the upper elementary curriculum. Moreover, it is theoretically possible for the upper-elementary teacher to work effectively with children at that level even if he or she is relatively unresponsive to their non-cognitive strivings since, given normative conditions of development in older children, emotional support is sought from peers rather than from the teacher; and teacher-child interactions can center on the exchange of knowledge and ideas. By comparison, at the pre- and primary-school levels, where children are dependent on the teacher's emotional support or are struggling to free themselves from the need for such support, the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process may hinge upon the teacher's

sensitivity and response to such needs. Thus, positive attitudes toward the childhood self as indicators of a general empathic potential in the adult for responding to the emotional needs of normal children may be less important in the upper-elementary teacher than in the teacher of younger children. Such a postulate is reasonable, however, only for the upper-elementary teacher who knows the curriculum content, is able to foster the children's investment in ideas, and who respects the importance of the peer group for children of this age. Further, the children themselves must fall within a range of cognitive, affective and social development such that they are independent of the teacher as an agent of emotional support and control, and are intellectually ready to participate in the exchange of knowledge and ideas. Where these conditions in older children do not obtain, then theoretically the personality resources of the teacher would become much more relevant in his or her capacity to meet the children's needs in the classroom and to find gratification in doing so.

The two studies outlined in this section and the further analyses described, serve to demonstrate how continued research might move toward more differentiated concepts and autobiographical predictors of adult potential for relating to children in general as well as to children who vary along important dimensions. The age level in normal children, and dominant personality patterns in children who are severely emotionally disturbed, represent only two such dimensions.

Directions for Further Research

The advent of the movement to provide day care for infants as well as for older children, the proliferation of preschools, increasing national concern with the special problems of minority group children, and with drug abuse in children from all segments of our society, suggest new and crucial dimensions for study in this area. These developments strongly invite research aimed at finding ways of identifying adults who can work effectively with infants as well as with children

of preschool age, and with children who do not conform at any age to normative expectations, as established through observations of white, middle-class children in the past.

Such efforts would necessitate consideration not only of personality variables in adults -- both men and women -- but also of socioeconomic and ethnic factors and of how such factors may interact with personality variables in promoting or obstructing the development of productive relationships with children from varying backgrounds. The student-teacher studies described in this report contain no data bearing directly on this issue, but the study of child-care workers, which included black and white subjects -- men as well as women -- from varying socioeconomic backgrounds, revealed that the attitudes of the workers toward individual children were not significantly affected by similarities or differences between the socioeconomic or ethnic backgrounds (or the sex) of workers or children. However, since the children had been institutionalized with diagnoses indicating severe emotional disturbance, the suggested irrelevance of socioeconomic and ethnic factors in that context cannot be generalized to adult-child relations in other kinds of settings. Moreover, in the time that has passed since that study was carried out, the issue of socioeconomic and ethnic match has itself grown greatly in importance, and not infrequently the selection of personnel to work with children appears based on the assumption that any adult of a specific ethnic group is more appropriate to work with children from that group than is an outsider, regardless of his qualifications. Since this issue has broad implications, it warrants research attention.

Whether or not ethnic or socioeconomic match is desirable, even if not a necessary condition for effective adult-child relations, there can be little doubt that even within a given ethnic group, personality variations in available adults are important. The question then arises as to whether the autobiographical indicators dealt with in the present study -- of white, middle-class women -- will be

found pertinent for assessing such variations. The concepts guiding the present study were themselves derived from observations of the white middle class. Moreover, consideration of social class and ethnic variations in the use of language to convey feeling could dictate against a hypothesis that the "affect" indicator, in particular, is widely applicable. There is reason to believe, however, that research examining basic attitudes toward the childhood self would be profitable in a wider context.

This is indicated not only by the findings in the child-care worker study, but also by current work of the investigator with groups of experienced teachers moving through an intensive two-year training program in educational leadership.

The majority of the trainees in the program are black and they come from childhood backgrounds ranging from extreme economic deprivation and broken homes to middle-class, intact families. In autobiographies which they wrote as part of their application to the program, two major trends were indicated which were found in the studies of student teachers that have been reported here. First, the trainees -- all of whom had been selected in part because of their demonstrated excellence in working with children -- conveyed, like the "outstanding" student teachers (and Gowan's outstanding teachers),[9] a strong residual sense of childhood self-esteem. Second, the autobiographies varied in their emphasis on childhood themes such as to differentiate among the trainees who preferred working with preschool, primary-grade or upper-elementary children in ways similar to those found in the autobiographies of the student teachers who were judged by their advisors as being more or less effective with children at each of these age levels.

In conclusion, the data cited in this paper support the hypothesis that the remembered childhood self reflects personality processes in the adult that are relevant to the kinds of relations that the adult develops with children. It is

now postulated that these processes transcend the effects of the adult's ethnic and socioeconomic background and that therefore the autobiography on childhood contains the potential for yielding predictors of teacher relations with children that have broad applicability.

Footnotes

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1. For an overview of this issue see Tanner and Lindgren.

2. See Wright and Tuska; Gowan; and Rosen, 1963, 1968. In addition, for background on the implications of autobiographical memories for explaining behavior, see Murray's classic study of college students. Murray acknowledges that much of the past that finds expression in behavior is not readily available to consciousness; however, based on the relationships found in his study between the subjects' memories and their observed behavior, he concluded that, among the countless traces of past events, the few that can be recovered in consciousness have special significance, and are lastingly influential in behavior.

3. The autobiographies had been collected, and the criterion ratings made, as part of a project by Zimiles, Biber, Rabinowitz, and May.

4. The author is grateful to these faculty members of the Graduate Programs Division, Bank Street College of Education, for their cooperation in the study.

5. "Outgoing toward children; intuitively able to understand how children think and feel; sensitive to and supportive of their needs; able to have fun with children and enter into their fantasies without loss of adult identity; versus emotionally aloof or withdrawn from children; unable to sense how children think and feel; restrictive of their spontaneity; sarcastic or humiliating; competitive with children; tendency to play favorites; uncomfortable with children; frankly threatened by them."

6. In the earlier study, perfect agreement was found between independent judges' assessments on the affect word dimension. As in that study, the expression "I loved" was by far the most prevalent in the present sample; subjects rarely said "I adored" or "was crazy about." Thus, judgments of the presence or absence of

strong positive affect words were almost mechanical. By contrast, some of the global assessments of the subjects' characterizations of the childhood self required considerable inference and clinical judgment. Agreement between independent judges making ratings on a similar dimension in a separate study was in the 70 to 80 per cent range.

7. A notable exception which later appeared was the work of Wright and Tuska (1967). Though not dealing with teaching performance as such, these investigators generated concepts bearing on the issue, and suggested how childhood identifications may influence a prospective teacher's choice to work with elementary or with high school students.

8. The autobiographies of the latter subjects are strikingly reminiscent of Gowan's findings from interviews with 20 "outstanding teachers." His subjects, who scored high on, among other things, scales reflecting "warm, understanding, friendly teacher behavior" as opposed to "aloof, egocentric, restricted" teacher behavior described their childhoods in ways that led Gowan to conclude that as children his subjects had experienced "a strong sense of personal and group worth." While Gowan suggested no theoretical rationale for the findings, they lend empirical support to the present associations.

9. See footnote 8.

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Table 1

Ratings of Capacity to Relate to Children in Relation to Presence or Absence of Strong, Positive Affect Words in Autobiographies on Childhood (N=48)*

Ratings	Strong, Positive Affect Words	
	Present	Absent
Outstanding	11	7
Good	7	8
Fair	2	5
Poor	1	7
Totals	21	27

*Chi square = 5.10; df = 1, $p < .05$.

Table 2

Ratings of Capacity to Relate to Children in Relation to Autobiographical Characterization of the Childhood Self (N=48)*

Ratings	Characterization of Childhood Self	
	Positive	Negative
Outstanding	16	2
Good	9	6
Fair	1	6
Poor	0	8
Totals	26	22

*Chi square = 19.6; df = 1, $p < .01$.